

Listen to me!

- When we listen to our children, we teach them how to listen to us.
- Check that your child feels happy and comfortable before telling them something important.
- Make sure that you have their full attention – bend to their level, give eye contact, smile, and speak kindly.
- Give positive instructions rather than negative ones – “Please do this...” rather than “Don’t do that!”
- Give one simple instruction at a time to prevent confusion.
- Go close to them and speak softly and kindly. Whisper rather than shout.
- Check that they have heard and understood your instructions.
- Tell them why it is important to do what you have asked.
- Remind them gently if they forget, to keep them focused on the task.
- Only shout in emergencies and life-saving situations.

Listen to them

- Stop what you are doing, bend down to their level, give them full eye contact and listen.
- Tell them what you have heard them say: “So you are saying that...”
- Listen for their feelings, and name them: “That sounds scary! Did you feel afraid?”
- Comfort their sad stories. “I am so sorry that happened to you. What can I do to help you feel better?”
- Listen for their relational needs (attention, acceptance, affection and kindness, appreciation, comforting, encouragement, respect, safety, knowing they are important to you, etc.) Do what you can to meet these needs.
- Ask how you can help.
- Keep their secrets – don’t use them to shame them.

When we listen to their “small talk” they know we will listen well when they have something really important to tell us.

The better we listen to them when they are children, the more likely it is that they will talk to us when they are teenagers.